



Governors' Visits to School Policy

Copley Junior School

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GOVERNORS' VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY

Governors' Visits to School

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance.

The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms.

If school and classroom visits are done well they will add immeasurably to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.

This policy includes a Governors' Visits report pro-forma which will help provide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for OfSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base e.g. a member of staff's appraisal.

This policy has been agreed between the Governing Body and staff.

Why Visit?

Many Governing Bodies link Governors to subjects, classes or year groups as a way of monitoring the curriculum. This will involve individual Governors visiting the school and classrooms and taking the opportunity to discuss issues with the Head teacher and relevant subject leader.

A number of Governors have specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs/Inclusion, English, Maths, Curriculum, Assessment and Safeguarding. This reinforces the need to visit not just the school but the classroom on a regular basis.

It also allows Governors to focus on particular areas, e.g.:

- the professional development of teaching and non-teaching staff
- a specific subject area
- a particular year group, class or school group e.g. School Council
- the management of the school's resources
- the condition of the building and its use

By visiting school and becoming better informed *Governors* will be:

- more aware of the needs of the school
- more able to approach staff to meet those needs
- well placed to bring to the LA any matters of concern
- in a good position to support the school in its community

What are the Benefits to *Governors* and Staff?

Governors	Staff
To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff	To get to know and build positive relationships with <i>Governors</i>
To get to know the children and their needs	
To recognise and celebrate success	To feel valued
To monitor the implementation of the School Improvement Plan	To appreciate and value the roles and responsibilities of all <i>Governors</i>
To increase their first hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions	
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach	To ensure <i>Governors</i> understand the reality of the classroom and the school
To see policies and schemes of work in practice	
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them	To highlight the need for further resources
To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils	
To demonstrate that the <i>Governing Body</i> is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process	
To develop links with a year group, subject area or school group e.g. School Council	
To develop individual <i>Governor's</i> roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs/Inclusion, English etc.	To share understanding of the specific area

What are Governors' visits not about?

The main point to emphasise is that Governors' visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:

- Checking on the progress of your own or known children (for this reason, wherever possible, year group link governors are allocated to different year groups to the one their child is in)
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues.

How often should I visit?

This will essentially depend on the number of Governors available to take on the responsibility and the size of the school staff, but a visit each half term is recommended.

Who schedules the visits?

Visits should always be agreed with the Head teacher and year group teachers/subject leader.

Visit Preparation

An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply '*the ground rules*'.

It is essential that a disproportionate amount of time should not be spent on planning and arranging visits. If you plan in advance what should always and never happen before, during and after a visit the ground rules will be firmly established and should avoid any problems and hopefully make the visit more beneficial and enjoyable.

The Governors' Visit Form attached to this policy at Appendix 1 can be partially completed at this stage and reference should be made throughout the process to the 'Preparation Checklist' which is attached at Appendix 2.

WHAT SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T HAPPEN?

	Always	Never
Before (at least one week prior to visit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the action points in the School Improvement Plan • Agree the purpose of the visit with Head teacher • Arrange details of the visit • Try to visit at different times of the day • Head teacher/subject leader draws up a schedule for visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? Agree evaluation questions that will be asked • Discuss with the Head teacher what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be observed and possible involvement • Agree level of confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn up unannounced for a focused, formal visit • Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and a recommended minimum notice of one week • Visit during a SATs and examinations week, unless specifically invited (e.g. planned visit to monitor the rigour and security of the school's administration procedures for SATs)
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared, organised and punctual • Report to the school office and sign in • Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit • Observe school/class guidelines • Jot down discussion points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monopolise staff • Interrupt the teaching or talk to the teacher while he/she is teaching • Behave like an Inspector! • Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils • Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit • Feedback appropriately to the Head teacher • Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant • Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Head teacher who will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave without a word of thanks and giving some feedback • Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors (except Chair) unless given permission

	<p>keep a central file</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit• Discuss how feedback will be shared with the relevant sub committee or full Board of Governors	
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What should I do?

A week before a classroom visit there are some questions you should clarify with the Head teacher or teacher:

- Do you mind me asking pertinent questions if I'm not sure about detail when helping e.g. If I'm not sure about the spelling policy, the methods used for calculations, how to help pupils read unknown words?
- What should I do if I see a pupil behaving inappropriately?

The focus of the visit

Remember a visit can be either to see the school generally in operation or a specific classroom visit.

Visits can focus on the following:

The School

- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- The use made of buildings and premises
- Security on site
- Break and lunch times
- The monitoring of Health and Safety
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture and subject equipment
- The impact of class sizes
- The deployment of support staff
- Office procedures e.g. budget monitoring
- To see a class or teacher led assembly

The Classroom

- Observation of particular curriculum areas i.e. English, Mathematics, Science, Computing, Design Technology (DT), History, Geography, Religious Education, Art and Design, Music, Physical Education, PSHCE, Spanish (MFL)
- The implementation of the curriculum
- Gain an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts and their attainment
- Observing a group of pupils working together on a task
- The impact of learning on educational visits

The list is by no means exclusive or exhaustive.

AFTER THE VISIT

We all need feedback after we have been visited or observed. This can be a sensitive area but it is essential that warm thanks are given and a comment on the focus agreed.

Remember as a Governor you are making the visit on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. It isn't appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Governing Body.

Staff should also realise that Governors are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management.

Any expression of concern should be shared with the Head teacher as soon as possible. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit unless health and safety or safeguarding is being compromised. This should always be reported immediately.

Oral and written feedback should be given to:

- The member(s) of staff involved
- The Head teacher
- The appropriate Committee or Governing Body

Oral feedback should be given to the member(s) of staff at the end of the visit after having seen the Head teacher.

Governors should agree with the Head teacher the level of detail that should be fed back to the member of staff.

Written feedback using the Governor's Visit Form (see Appendix 1) should be completed and copies given to the Head teacher and access available to member(s) of staff.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Governors' Visits to School Policy

The appropriate Committee will review this policy annually and report back to the Governing Body in the Autumn term. The review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Have I learned more about the school?
- Are we better informed and enabled to make effective decisions?
- Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- Do the staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have I helped the Governing Body fulfil its duties?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Policy reviewed and agreed by teaching staff and the full Governing Body: October 2016

APPENDIX 1

GOVERNOR VISIT FORM

Name:	Governor responsibility:	Date:
		Duration:
Area of School/Staff/Class visited:		
Actions from the previous meeting (RAG Rated)		
Purpose of visit: (Objectives)		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
Evaluative Questions agreed before the visit between...		
1.	How are you? Evidence?	
2.	What progress has been made in? What is the impact?	
3.		
4.		
Governors' Questions and Comments		

Subject leaders' comments:
Head teacher's comments:
Governor closing comments:
Signed: Governor: _____ Staff Member(s): _____ Head teacher: _____ Date:

Summary of next steps planned:
Planned next action: •

APPENDIX 2

GOVERNING BODY SCHOOL VISIT FORM

<p>Pre and Post Visit Checklist for School and Governor</p>
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School	Governor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know why the <i>Governor</i> is visiting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I made a formal appointment with the Head teacher?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know what the <i>Governor</i> is expecting to see? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I know the specific purpose of the visit?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the focus of the visit also a focus in our School Improvement Plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I arranged my time so that I can be sure to be punctual?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we drawn up a timetable for the visit? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I thought about how I will approach the teacher in the classroom?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do individual members of staff know that they are going to be visited? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I thought about what I will actually do during the lesson?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have other key members of staff been informed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will I give feedback to the staff, Head teacher and <i>Governing Body</i>?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the appropriate documentation ready and available? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I remembered that what I see or hear or might find out is confidential and not for sharing with other <i>Governors</i> or parents in general?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the evaluation questions the governor will ask been agreed with the Head teacher? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I build on this for the next visit?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did I address any difficulties I met?